

Parenting Views

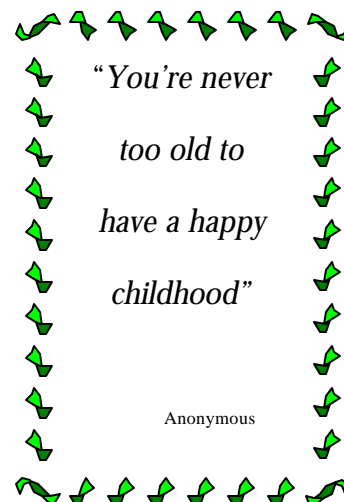
CELEBRATING HOLIDAYS AS A BLENDED FAMILY

In a blended family, at least one adult has a child or children from a former relationship. Custody arrangements may result in the parents building a family around full-time, shared or weekend step-parenting. Consider these suggestions that may help:

- ★★ **Be Flexible** Who says your family has to celebrate a given holiday on its official date? Do your best to stay out of power struggles about where the children will spend the holiday. For example, in your family you may decide to celebrate Thanksgiving on the following Sunday. After doing this for a year or two, you will have a new tradition in your family. Creating new ways of celebrating encourages the growth of bonds between family members and creates pleasant memories that are not rooted in the more distant past.
- ★★ **Encourage Expression of Feelings** Let youngsters, grandparents, and others share their feelings. Allow time and space for the child whose biological parent is not present to express sadness, regret, or guilt. Sometimes a child will feel disloyal to the absent parent. Acknowledging such emotions helps the child move through these feelings rather than getting stuck in them. Reassure the child who will not be with you that he will be missed, but that you will be all right. Give him permission to enjoy himself with the parent he visits. If you have conflicting emotions, confide in a caring adult rather than your child.
- ★★ **Plan Ahead** Deciding how to celebrate the holidays may not be easy, but planning in advance can help you bypass problems. When young children are involved, it is nice to anticipate the holidays without the stress of last-minute planning. Keep the plans simple.
- ★★ **Avoid over-commitment** Do less, better. Keep your celebrations manageable and enjoyable. End family get-togethers before fatigue sets in, and plan activities that leave everyone relaxed when they're over. If you share gifts, be thoughtful, fair, and creative, making sure you don't spend more than you can afford.
- ★★ **Rise above Animosity** Children may not care all that much when, where, or how they celebrate a holiday. However, it is very important to them that the adults they love get along with each other. Look upon challenging relationships as a test of your creative ability, kindness and inner strength. You set an invaluable example for children.
- ★★ **Enjoy Your Family's Uniqueness** The idea of perfect families who celebrate perfect holidays is a myth. All families struggle, and it's through these difficulties that we grow in understanding. Appreciate your family as a training ground for love. Discuss what is right in your family, and express appreciation for one another. Do it until it becomes a habit.
- ★★ **Maintain a Sense of Humor** All step-families go through hard times. For youngsters and older folks, gloom disperses quickly when someone gets silly, breaks into a grin, or makes a funny comment. Especially during the holiday season, blended family members need permission to let the past stay in the past and to enjoy the present.



December 2003



SWEET PUMPKIN DIP

2 Cups Cool-Whip

2 Cups Spiced Pumpkin
Pie Filling

Mix & Chill

Serve with:
Graham Crackers
Ginger Snaps
Animal Crackers

Source: Nan McHugh, MSU Extension
Nutrition Department

MSU Extension
21885 Dunham Rd. - Suite 12
Clinton Township, MI 48036
Phone: (586) 469-6430

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Candy Cane Mouse

Hang these cute mice on the tree by their tails. Make them in all shapes, sizes and colors for mice with different personalities.

- Cut body and ears from desired color of felt.
- Cut the slits in body as shown in pattern.
- Glue wiggle eyes and black pom nose as shown in picture.
- Insert ears through double slits.
- Insert one end of candy cane through top single slit and other end between back of body and ears.
- Add this poem for an extra special gift.



Source: creativeladiesministry.com

I am a little gift for you to bring
a smile without fail. Hang me
on your tree and later munch on
my sweet tail!

SAFE TOYS FOR INFANTS, TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS

Whether toys are bought or homemade, these tips help keep the children safe:

- ★ **Clean toys.** Carefully clean all materials and containers by washing and rinsing. Disinfect after washing with a solution of one tablespoon of bleach to one quart of water, then air dry the item.
- ★ **Smooth any sharp edges.** Make sure there are no sharp points or splinters on the item. Use tape to blunt corners and rough edges, such as tin can rims or juice can lids. Thoroughly sand and oil wooden surfaces.
- ★ **Avoid choking and suffocation.** If the item can fit inside a toilet paper tube (about 1 1/2 inches in diameter), it is small enough to cause choking and should not be used for children under 3 years of age. Make sure there are no parts of a toy that could be pulled or sucked off, such as buttons, googly eyes, ribbons, or other decorations. Do not use staples. Instead, sew or tape items together.
- ★ **Use nontoxic materials.** Carefully check all labels on markers, paints, glue, finishes on cloth or other surfaces for nontoxic components before using materials.

Resource: Rhoda Redleaf & Audrey Robertson. (1999) Learn & Play the Recycle Way. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

GIFT IDEAS FOR ILL OR ELDERLY FRIENDS AND RELATIVES

- The ill and elderly have a difficult time getting out to stores to buy cards and they often don't wish to bother others with shopping needs. Over time they begin to lose touch with friends and family members. Help them share thoughts and greetings with others by giving them greeting cards and note cards. Select several get well, birthday, thinking-of-you and sympathy cards and perhaps one of each wedding, anniversary and baby shower card. Remember to include stamps too!
- Items that are greatly appreciated are combs, brushes, socks (cold feet are common), hose slippers, soap, notepads, pen or pencil and bookmarks, afghans and throws to be placed over their shoulders or knees help keep them comfortable on cold winter days or in cool air-conditioned rooms. Consider comfortable sleepwear in natural fibers or brushed satin. (The slick satin helps them turn easily in bed while the nap feels soft and cuddly). New easy-to-use clothing in their favorite colors make elderly people feel unique and special.
- A bed or chair caddy keeps things in easy reach. Bags or carriers that attach to a walker or wheelchair can help them keep track of their belongings as they move around. Include a flashlight in case the lights go out. Large-handled hairbrushes help those who have trouble holding smaller handles. Clocks that reflect the time in large numbers on the ceiling mean no turning to look and no glasses needed, even in a dark room.
- Gifts that are much appreciated include rides out in the country or to places they enjoy, or for brief shopping trips. If they are ambulatory or in wheelchairs, offer an occasional ride to church or a special community event such as a parade.
- **The very best gift is yourself, the gift of your presence. When distance separates you, pick up the phone to say hi and share news often.**

Source: Linda Adler, M.A., Extension Specialist for Home Furnishings

Upcoming Programs

Alternatives to Anger Saturdays, 10:00-noon Lois Wagner Memorial Library
35200 Division, Richmond, MI 48062

January 10-What's happening to us when we get angry. Recognizing what's going on so we can break the cycle.

January 17-Anger from us toward others. How to de-stress.

January 24-Anger directed at us and how to handle it. How to stop taking it personally.

January 31-Communication skills to solve problems.

Registration required. Call 586-469-6430. (Cost \$7.00 workbook-per couple or individual).